



Quarterly Report
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:
POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00
January 1 to March 31, 2002

I. SUMMARY

Political and programmatic events of this quarter were largely dominated by the ratification of the remaining elements of the August 2001 Ohrid Peace Agreement, and in particular, the law on local self-government. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) took advantage of the opportunities presented by the passage of the law, and building upon the Institute's December focus group research, reached out to mayors and local council chairs to help them communicate the meaning of the new laws to their constituents. Uncertainty surrounding Macedonia's 2002 parliamentary election date remained a part of the political landscape this quarter, and NDI made adjustments to its election programming as necessary. The Institute hired two new resident representatives, the first to work with political parties, and the second to assist NDI's domestic election monitoring partner, Citizens for Citizens (C4C).

Throughout the quarter, NDI held a series of workshops in cooperation with the Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC). This jointly conducted program was designed for political party youth activists and candidates and provided practical advice on negotiation skills, risk assessment, and violence reduction, and techniques and skills to mount an effective campaign based on democratic election principles that are non-violent, non-racist, and inclusive.

Macedonia's long-term political stability depends greatly on the ability of its institutions to guide the country through the political and social changes mandated by the peace agreement. More specifically, Macedonia requires a democratic political system through which it can deal with interethnic conflict and other difficult issues while maintaining political stability. NDI has supported democratization efforts in Macedonia since 1993 in the areas of parliamentary development, non-partisan election monitoring, and political party building. Today, the principle challenges to democratic consolidation include a weak and underutilized parliament, highly centralized political parties, a citizenry unaccustomed to demanding accountability from its political leaders, and widespread corruption within the political system.

II. BACKGROUND

NDI has provided democratization assistance in Macedonia since 1993 in the areas of civic education, election monitoring, voter education, political party building and parliamentary

development. Since 1999, NDI has worked to increase the capacity of members of parliament (MPs) in their roles as legislators and elected political representatives. Such capacity building is achieved through training MPs and their staff on caucus operations, commission functions, and constituent relations. Considerable progress has been achieved in the transfer of political and legislative skills to individual members of parliament, and promising institutional developments have occurred. Still, inter-ethnic political conflict bordering on open and prolonged warfare has impeded NDI's program implementation and has laid bare important, persistent challenges to the country's stability and, therefore, its democratization.

As this quarter began, the slow pace of parliament's ratification and implementation of the remaining elements of the Ohrid Agreement was of concern to most international and some domestic observers. Apprehension that the procrastination and political gamesmanship characterizing the process could lead to a return to violence as the winter months gave way to warmer weather was felt throughout much of January and February. Fortunately, as the months progressed, positive steps were taken to legislate the remaining key conditions of the Ohrid Peace Accord, including the January 24 passage of the Law on Local Self Government. A crucial piece of the agreement, the law acts to decentralize government and give the 120 municipalities in Macedonia more authority over a wide variety of public services, including urban planning, environmental protection, local economic development, social services and child protection, health, education and culture. Not surprisingly, the law has been widely praised by ethnic-Albanians who see it as an opportunity for more control over their lives, while Macedonians have expressed fears it would lead to federalization and partition.

The Law on Amnesty, another critical aspect of the Ohrid Agreement, was passed on March 7. The law granted a pardon to all of the Albanian combatants who handed in their arms before September 26 last year as well as those who are under investigation for their alleged role in the conflict before 2001. Importantly, it also gave amnesty to those Macedonians who refused conscription for army service and others who deserted. The release of approximately 300 imprisoned Albanians, seen by many as a crucial step toward peace in Macedonia, has already begun. The amnesty has helped secure a return of regular police officers to villages from which hostile Albanians had barred them up to now. Furthermore, police have been deployed into an additional 10 villages in crisis regions, while police checkpoints were removed as part of an overall plan to re-secure regions formerly controlled by the National Liberation Army (NLA).

The passage of these laws paid off for Macedonia in a literal sense, as it was a prerequisite to a donors conference meeting attended by over 40 international aid donors on March 12. The donors eventually pledged a \$515 million aid package for Macedonia to help rebuild and stabilize the country. Most of the money has been earmarked to help balance the Macedonian government's cash-strapped budget, while the rest will pay for implementing the specific proposals of the peace agreement - in particular, devolving power to local authorities - and for the reconstruction of damaged housing.

Despite the relative calm among Macedonia's ethnic groups, what appear to be isolated instances of violence occurred during the past three months. On March 2, seven unidentified individuals were killed by Macedonian security forces, which later claimed the men were terrorists linked to Al Qaeda and were planning an attack on foreign embassies. The

circumstances of their death as well as their identity remain a mystery with an abundance of contradictions, speculation and rumors. In addition, two men died and five were injured later in March when clashes took place between two rival ethnic Albanian groups—the NLA and more-radical Albanian National Army (ANA). The shootout reflects the rivalry between former Albanian guerrillas of the now disbanded NLA and ANA, with ANA Supreme Commander Hekuran Asllani calling the NLA “traitors” and once again imploring Albanians to join them, repeating the vow to continue fighting.

The greatest unknown on the political landscape continues to be the role of the Albanian Coordinative Council, formed in late February by the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) and the New Democratic Party (NDP). Its exact mission remains somewhat unclear; while the council’s stated purpose is to coordinate the Albanian community’s response to the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement, an additional aim may be to rally the Albanian vote during the election with the possibility of an integrated candidate list. Former NLA Commander Ali Ahmeti’s election as chairman signals a change in the Albanian political dynamic that is still not yet clearly understood outside the Albanian community, or perhaps even within it. Several observers, including Albanian spokespersons, stated that the council is the way to isolate “extremists” in the Albanian community.

The timing of parliamentary elections was another point of heavy debate in this quarter, with parties disagreeing widely over late spring or early fall as the date for elections. Yet even without a concrete date, many of the parties have already begun pre-election campaign planning and activities.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Focus Group Presentations

Presentations of the results from seven focus groups conducted in December 2001 were the major activity in the month of January. NDI distributed kits, including transcripts of the presentation in Macedonian, Albanian and English, at each session. David Calef and Doug Schoen from the New York research firm, Penn, Schoen and Berland, conducted the presentations along with NDI Country Director Sheila Fruman.

The presentations were held on January 30 and 31 for the following groups:

- USAID acting chief of mission, the deputy chief of mission, and other representatives as well as U.S. Embassy political staff
- Domestic NGOs in Macedonia
- Representatives of the international community
- Members of parliament and members of the political party leadership in Macedonia

Each session involved a presentation of the research results and a question and answer period. Following the final presentation, a reception was held for participants from all groups to provide an opportunity for informal discussions with the presenters.

Following are the key findings of the focus group research:

- The most pressing issues facing the country for both Macedonians and Albanians are unemployment, the poor state of the economy, political corruption, the unresolved crisis and resulting lack of security, government incompetence and mismanagement and political self-interest.
- Although both groups expressed a strong desire for the country to return to “normal,” many fear that the damage may be too big to repair. Nonetheless, they continue to express the hope that the fighting will not resume and that they will somehow be able to get on with their lives and put the past behind them.
- While some clearly feel betrayed by the way in which the Ohrid Agreement was negotiated or, in the view of some, imposed by outsiders, by and large people seem eager for real information about what it contains and how it will be implemented. There is a desire, expressed in all of the groups, for more information: “There is no opportunity to discuss the pros and cons,” “We need it for economic reasons but I fear what it will mean,” “It’s being implemented with no information,” “Not getting any information except in the media.”
- People want politicians to start working together on finding solutions. Since the Agreement was signed by the four major parties, it provides an opportunity for politicians to show they can work together. If this could be demonstrated, it would be a welcome change. One participant said, “Both sides should find honest leaders who will promote the idea of living together.”

Post Focus Group Activities: Mayors and Local Councils

Following the focus group presentations, NDI met with representatives from the Local Government Reform Project (LGRP) who have been working on issues related to the law on local self-government with the Macedonian Association of Mayors and Heads of Council (ZELS). LGRP has found the ZELS organization to be one of the most promising political associations in the country, in terms of what appears to be a legitimate desire of its membership to initiate reforms. As the NDI focus group research revealed, there is a strong desire among Macedonian citizens for more information about elements of the Ohrid Agreement, including the new law on local self-government. ZELS lobbied hard for the new law, which was passed on the eve of the focus group presentations. In cooperation with the LGRP and OSCE, the Institute developed and presented a joint proposal to the ZELS standing committee meeting in February, in which NDI offered its assistance in the development of a national public awareness campaign on the law.

From March 25 to 28, four one-day workshops were held for mayors and council chairs on developing a communications plan with an identifiable message about the new law on local self-government. The workshops were conducted in Ohrid, Skopje, Veles and Stip, cities that are regional centers and more easily accessible for participants. Approximately 140 mayors and council chairs from every region of the country attended the sessions, which were conducted by

NDI Macedonia staff Sheila Fruman and Johan Hamels, NDI Kosovo Country Director Scott Bates and NDI Albania staff member Gillian Gloyer.

Participants brainstormed on the both the positive aspects of and concerns about the new law. The mayors and council chairs then were asked to consolidate the ideas into three final messages, incorporating the most important elements raised in the previous session. Examples of the final messages included, “setting on our own destiny,” “bringing government back to the people,” and “making decisions here at home.” Also discussed in the workshops were possible opportunities for the elected officials to make contact and communicate in person with constituents about the meaning of the law. One sample approach was that of a mayor introducing the new law to a local sports club. The mayor could explain in tangible terms how the devolution of power and fiscal changes in the new law would enable members of the club to build a new football field on their own initiative, without having to get prior approval from Skopje.

At the same time, the NDI trainers helped participants prepare for possible attack from those constituents working against the Ohrid Agreement. Participants developed various strategies to counter such attacks, all the while focusing on responding with a positive message. Another positive outcome of the trainings was the observed strong inter-ethnic communication among participants. In one instance, ethnic Macedonian participants helped their Albanian colleague to better express himself, as he struggled with the language barrier.

Citizens for Citizens

The postponement of the election date to the fall and the arrival of Vladimir Pran to work as NDI Macedonia’s director of election monitoring resulted in an intensification of work with C4C. Vladimir Pran joins NDI after years of working with the Croatian election monitoring NGO GONG, as well as experience working for NDI in Kosovo, Ukraine and Montenegro. NDI reviewed the subgrant budget and made revisions in order to provide C4C more resources for field activities, campaign management staff, communications and campaign staff meetings. The revised budget significantly reduced resources for equipment and printed materials the due to NDI’s assessment that C4C did not have the organizational capacity to effectively distribute the materials originally budgeted. A memorandum of understanding was signed that lays the ground for a partnership between NDI and C4C on domestic election monitoring and outlines the responsibilities of both organizations.

On February 20, NDI provided assistance to a campaign-planning seminar for C4C’s core staff members, which included planning for the “Campaign Opening Seminar” held on March 19 and 20. The seminar introduced the overall campaign and campaign-related activities to C4C’s staff, including volunteers and observers, relationship-building, the media, legal frameworks and election administration, campaign structure/administration/communications/reporting, elections day strategy, parallel vote tabulation (PVT), post-election activities and campaign timeline activities. In addition, a main priority of the seminar was to establish a clear description of responsibilities for C4C’s regional coordinators.

C4C and NDI developed a new workplan for C4C's election monitoring program based on a projected fall date for the election. The revised plan consists of the following four key elements:

- Voters' list
- Party Code of Conduct
- Pre-election environment monitoring
- Monitoring of electoral process

Each of these components will strengthen C4C's organizational and monitoring capacity and expand its ability to significantly contribute to the electoral process.

Funding and Cooperation with Other Donors

C4C's subgrant was extended by one month (no-cost) in order to meet the requirements of an extended campaign and to reflect the later than anticipated start of the campaign. Funds are also being reallocated from budget categories that were not previously spent due to the late start of the campaign. Some donors have approached C4C directly, while others notified NDI of their interest in funding C4C's activities. To date, NDI has assisted C4C in obtaining funds from the British Embassy, and CIDA has provided 50,000 CND to be used for production of TV and radio spots, and for the purchase of airtime on nationwide and local media for C4C's volunteer recruitment campaign. In addition, NDI has been contacted by Norwegian People's Aid, OSCE, and Freedom House regarding possible cooperation in funding C4C.

Nansen Dialogue/NDI Campaign Workshops for Youth

In February, NDI completed the planning and began the implementation of its cooperative program with the Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC), a Norwegian NGO focused on conflict management and prevention. Together, NDI and NDC provided a series of multi-party training seminars for party youth activists. On the first day of each workshop NDC provided conflict management training, which was followed the next day by NDI's election campaign training. The joint program was designed specifically for political party activists with the aim of stimulating dialogue among individuals and groups with different political stances, and providing practical advice on negotiation skills, risk assessment, and violence reduction. NDI focused its training on providing party activists and potential candidates with the techniques and skills to mount an effective campaign based on inclusive, nonviolent, and democratic principles.

Multiparty groups of youth wing representatives participated in the eight workshops from February 24 to March 17 in Gostivar, Struga Skopje, Veles, Stip, Strumica and Prilep. In total, 102 young people from 12 political parties took part in the sessions. NDI Macedonia's Johan Hamels, NDI Croatia's Allan Sisnicki and Karen Gainer, and NDI Kosovo's Heather Kashner conducted the workshops.

The workshops were built around the mythical country of "Everywhere", in which three parties competed for the voter's support: the Bears Party with a platform of social protection and health care; the Flowers Party with a platform of ecology, quality of life/environment; and the Gold Party with a platform promoting economic growth, free trade and investment in private

enterprise. Throughout the course of the day, participants created messages to win undecided voters and developed strategies given limited resources. At the end of the session, participants took part in a door-to-door role-play, in which those with previous door-to-door experience played the part of the undecided voter.

Parliamentary Internship Program

This quarter, the participants in the parliamentary internship program received a series of three trainings on conflict management. In January and February, the interns were provided with training on: defining conflict; the structure, sources and functions of conflict; and the development of conflict management skills. At the end of March, the interns also participated in a training session on successful negotiation and tools for negotiating more effectively. The final session covered understanding difficult people, in which the interns learned about understanding different character types – the “10 Classic Problem Types”- and how to find ways to deal with them. They also discussed the possibilities of how to move from conflict to cooperation and how to reach a deeper understanding of a conflict.

Due to numerous meetings among the top party figures in the first half of the quarter, parliament was not often in session. The interns conducted research (Law on tariffs, Law on Special Rights on the Status of the Security Forces), provided comparative legal analyses (Law on Amnesty in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – 2002, Law on election of MPs - Sweden), translated materials (European Peoples Party materials, list of members, parties ideologically similar), organized meetings with international delegations and journalists (representatives from the German parliament and the European Parliament), followed commission work and assisted in the preparation of reports (Commission for Political System, Commission for International Affairs, Finance and Budget Commission etc), and worked on legislative projects (Law on Election of MPs, Law for Ratification of Diplomas between Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Albania, Law on Amnesty, Law on Election Model).

In the second half of the quarter, the interns’ activities in parliament were mainly oriented toward the MP’s preparations for the law on amnesty. Some interns provided their opinions about the Amnesty Law in essays and reports, while others conducted necessary research. In addition, they also followed the work of the commissions: including working with the secretaries of the commissions; writing and reviewing the commissions’ reports, conducting research on the law on corruption, rules of procedure, higher education, election model, and health; scheduled meetings and working trips for the MPs; attended official events (Ukraine Embassy reception), and worked with the PHARE representatives in the parliament on a project on the harmonization of Macedonian laws to those of the European Union.

Outside Meetings

This quarter, NDI engaged in consultations with Macedonian MPs and political party representatives, NGOs and citizens groups, as well as international consultants, NGOs, embassy officials, experts, and government bodies. Topics discussed covered current NDI training and consultations, campaign activities, issue identification, and opportunities for future work with NDI.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objectives:

- An expanded group of parliamentary interns increases legislative research skills and begins to work outside the party caucus groups in other parliamentary domains, such as commissions.
- Members of parliament and parliamentary staff have skills with which to conduct legislative affairs through expanded information technology.
- Orient Macedonian politicians toward constructive leadership and engagement with citizens in the peace process.
- Provide communications strategies so that MPs can approach constituents and foster dialogue about the impact of the Framework Agreement and the resulting constitutional amendments.
- Help create a pre-election environment that encourages fair and more transparent elections.

Focus Groups/ZELS:

The ZELS workshops held this quarter were a direct application of NDI's December focus group research, which had revealed a strong desire on the part of citizens for increased information. As a result, NDI, LGRP, and the OSCE determined there was an opportunity to work with ZELS, as one of the most trusted group of politicians in the country, to develop a public awareness campaign on the new law. ZELS unanimously supported NDI's proposal for communications training, and the Institute plans to continue to look for ways to support this group of elected officials.

Citizens for Citizens:

After consultations with NDI, C4C is using the conclusions of its December election law reform roundtable as the basis for the presentation of its past work, and is advocating for stronger election law enforcement, open candidates lists, and greater transparency in the electoral process. At the same time, C4C is presenting its own election monitoring campaign as a contribution to fair and free elections, supporting rather than challenging the authority of the state electoral administration. To date, it has been able to meet key officials in the country's biggest parties.

Political Parties:

The joint NDC/NDI workshops helped to get participants thinking about campaign planning in a structured and thorough way and the presentation of different types of campaign plans opened up a wider range of possibilities for party members to organize. In written evaluations, participants stated that they planned to design better strategies with the techniques they learned from NDI, in order to keep their current party supporters and to win over undecided voters. In particular, they found the concrete example of using petitions as a valuable way of gathering information. Some participants reported that they had changed their views on direct voter contact techniques and door-to-door, going from skeptical to willing to engage in the activity.

The experiences shared by the NDI staff from Croatia and Kosovo helped participants to reconsider ideas they thought impossible or inapplicable to their country. Such techniques as going door-to-door, low budget campaigning, volunteer recruiting, inexpensive/innovative outreach materials, now seemed reasonable and effective.

V. EVALUATION

In the aftermath of last year's crisis, NDI spent much needed time this quarter and last redefining its program of activity in order to ensure its relevance to the changing political environment. This has meant undertaking an assessment of current conditions, a review of existing program commitments, and an analysis of the potential role NDI could play between now and the elections.

Political Party Work

The roundtable sessions originally planned for late February were indefinitely postponed. With the parties preoccupied with pre-election strategy and campaigning, the Institute felt it would be extremely difficult to convince them to sit down together in one room and talk about conflict resolution. In essence, it seems that events overtook the timeliness of a roundtable on conflict resolution, at least for now.

The participants in the NDC/NDI training expressed great appreciation for the opportunity to work together and share experiences in politically mixed groups. A result of the multiparty atmosphere was that diverse opinions were aired and respected, and a working environment was created that initiated new ideas. The participants were also able to share problems common among all party youth representatives, as well as listen to their colleagues' dilemmas and ideas. Importantly, the mixed groups also provided for improved circumstances for participants to express themselves as individuals as opposed to party members. The multiparty/mixed regional workshops could help lessen the potential for violent political competition. In the case of these workshops, working through the seminar issues with their former opponents/current team mates, could change perceptions and lessen prejudices people have about one another.

ZELS Workshops

The workshops were well attended and indicated a strong desire by the mayors and heads of council to provide citizens with information about the new law. They also indicated, however, that a corresponding strategy is required to ensure that the enabling legislation is passed in order for them to assume their new responsibilities set out in the law.

Election Programming

NDI is continuing to assess the pre-election environment and options for establishing a long-term observation program. The Institute has determined that C4C will expand its original program from domestic monitoring to incorporate voter registration activities along with the already planned party code of conduct. Each of these will provide opportunities for C4C to

increase its credibility and strengthen its organizational ability for monitoring activities on Election Day. Also still under consideration is the idea of an early pre-election mission to precede the one already planned for a month or so before the election.

Information Technology

The completion of the information technology installations and upgrades originally planned to begin this quarter were delayed due to budgeting concerns. These activities will continue as planned next quarter.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Citizens for Citizens

NDI will work with C4C on the following during the next quarter:

- Voters' List Monitoring
- Party Code of Conduct
- Pre-election environment monitoring
- Monitoring of Electoral process

Each of these components will strengthen C4C's organizational and monitoring capacity and expand its ability to significantly contribute to the electoral process.

Parliamentary Internship Program Evaluation

In April, NDI will undertake an evaluation of its Parliamentary Internship Program to better understand its successes and failures thus far, and to enable program staff to better plan for the future of the program. The evaluation will include a document review, as well as interviews with current and former interns, parliamentary group coordinators, commission chairs, the deputy general secretary of the parliament, MPs, parliamentary staff and other interested parties.

Information Technology

Next quarter, NDI will continue the installation and upgrade of computer hardware and software to the parliament. NDI's Information Technology Director Stephen Jarrett will visit Skopje to oversee its installation and to conduct follow-up training and consultations.

ZELS and Political Parties

NDI will present a report to the ZELS standing committee on the four workshops held throughout the country, including a summary of messages/themes, concerns about the new law on local self government, talking points which can be used by the mayors and heads of councils, and suggestions for future activities. NDI will also consult with LGRP on the production of a leaflet to be used to raise awareness on the new law.

In addition, NDI plans to consult with parties regarding the upcoming campaign, as well as provide training on selected topics such as media relations, voter targeting, and candidate preparation. Training is scheduled to commence in May, and will continue through the beginning of August, taking into account the 30-day rule prohibiting party training in the thirty days prior to an election.